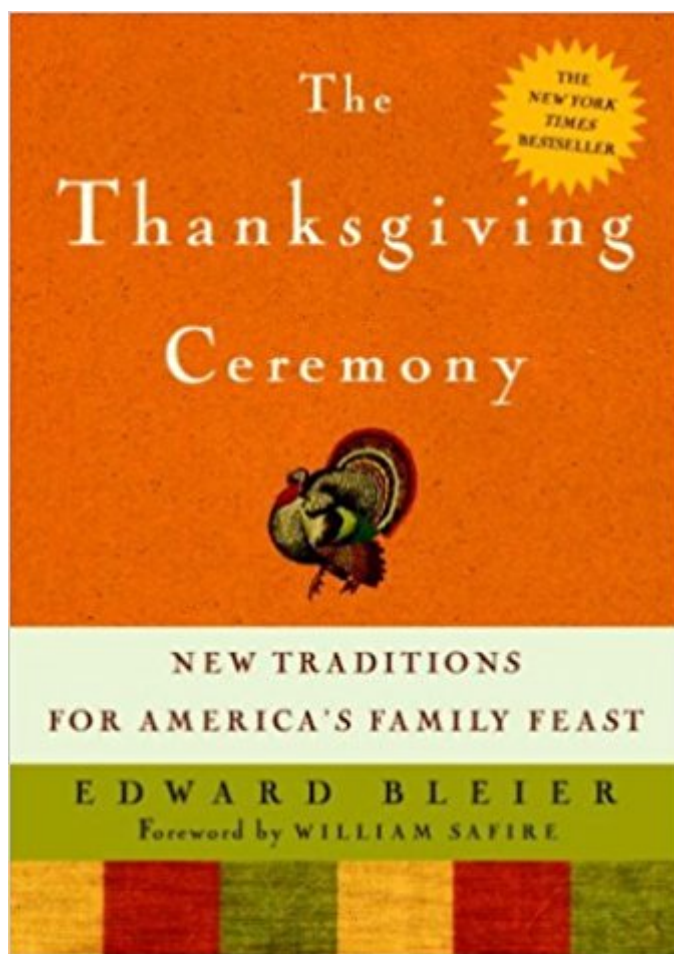


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The Thanksgiving Ceremony: New Traditions For America's Family Feast



Synopsis

When we think about Thanksgiving we contemplate history, the autumn harvest, and, of course, eating turkey and watching football. But most of all, we think about family, friends, and the bounty of our country. Edward Bleier's *The Thanksgiving Ceremony* introduces a brand-new tradition for the Thanksgiving table, offering a wonderful way for all Americans to give thanks and rejoice in the sense of togetherness and community this special holiday brings. The heart of the book is a participatory ceremony designed to be read aloud around the table. It recounts the story of the early settlers and the challenges they, and all subsequent immigrant generations, faced. The ceremony provides roles for guests of all ages and takes about twenty minutes. There is also a brief history of Thanksgiving, as well as a wide array of poems, hymns, songs, prayers, and readings that enable families to create and customize their own ceremony, including pieces by Maya Angelou, Irving Berlin, Woodie Guthrie, and Emily Dickinson. As William Safire writes in his foreword, "Getting together for a grand dinner party may be glorious fun, but a holiday should have a focus—one that reminds us why we celebrate it. This long-overdue book offers that focus in a short, elegant format that any gathering of family and friends can participate in, and enjoy, for many years to come. Praise for *The Thanksgiving Ceremony*: "The Thanksgiving Ceremony is a small gem—a book that brings to life the history, songs, and traditions, old and new, of the most widely celebrated holiday of the year. This is a buoyant book, full of hope and praise of all that makes us Americans."—Julie Nixon Eisenhower "There are times, like these, when it's important to count our blessings. Ed Bleier's delightful book lets us do the math."—Alan Alda and Arlene Alda "This great country has provided the 'music' and this book provides the eloquent 'lyrics' for the Thanksgiving tables of all Americans, regardless of race or religion. It's a joyous tribute to who we are, and can be, as Americans."—Quincy Jones "Over the years, I've had so many Thanksgiving dinners with Ed and Magda that when Ed Bleier talks turkey, all of us listen."—Steven Spielberg "The Thanksgiving Ceremony is a wonderful and moving idea. It is central to what we celebrate and a happy reminder of why America's principles endure as they do."—Peter Jennings and Kayce Freed

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Customer Reviews

This little volume's central offering—a short spoken reading—is the author's model of a Thanksgiving ceremony for those seeking to bring greater spiritual depth to their holiday celebrations. Bleier, a television executive and member of the Council on Foreign Relations, claims that Thanksgiving is the "only holiday centered on a meal that also incorporates all Americans of all religions and ethnic backgrounds." Our current focus on feast and football, he says, fails to meet the spiritual needs of the day—and his template for a formal family ceremony around the Thanksgiving table is designed to change that. The brief but informative historical background provided by both the author and William Safire (who penned the foreword) details the precedents for and evolution of Thanksgiving as an idea and as a holiday, stretching from the Mayflower pilgrims to President Bush and his post 9-11 declaration of thanks "to God for the many blessings we enjoy as a free, faithful and fair-minded land." The ceremony itself is thoughtful but stiff, containing passages that some may find awkward and contrived, including a praise for the "navigability of our lakes and rivers." It is difficult to picture any group pulling off the 20-minute, earnest but dry ceremony, although those seeking a framework for serious reflection may eagerly appropriate the suggestions in this book. The strongest reason for purchase will be the nearly 40 pages given to quotes, prayers and hymns appropriate to the day, culled from a wide variety of secular and religious sources and collected for those who wish to proclaim their thanks with a more personalized style. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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WHAT A TREAT IS IN STORE FOR ALL WHO SAVOR THIS LITTLE GEM.

In many ways, Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. Even though retailers are now jumpstarting Christmas even before Halloween, Thanksgiving is still the true kickoff to the Holiday season. Our traditions of turkey, pumpkin pie, football, family, Christmas movies on TV and music on the radio are all a part of the wonderful Thanksgiving tradition. I suppose one of the great things about Thanksgiving is the many different ways that it's celebrated regionally and family to family, as we all have our unique traditions that we uphold. Mr. Bleier's book begins with an excellent history of the holiday, detailing not only the Pilgrims landing in Plymouth, but the reasons why they came, the people who came BEFORE they did, as well as how native Americans felt about the Pilgrims. You'll know some of this history but I can guarantee much of it you will be reading for the very first

time! Mr. Bleier provides the inspiration that makes the Thanksgiving holiday so fun and meaningful in poems, songs, and stories. The book gives us pause to remember what this great holiday is all about.

Celebrated New York Times columnist William Safire, in his foreword to Edward Bleier's "The Thanksgiving Ceremony" writes "a holiday should have a focus... that reminds us why we celebrate it"... This book does just that. It tells us the history of Thanksgiving, the why, the when, the where (I did not know it is celebrated in 7 other countries!) and, most importantly , it gives us a very original and moving ceremony to be read aloud by all the guests- youngsters and adults- at the Thanksgiving table. This is a very inclusive and lovely new tradition which I cannot wait to use at our own Thanksgiving next Thursday. We'll be 14 this year and I got 14 books... one for each guest. We'll sing some of the songs and read some of the poems also included in the book; this should add joy and spirituality to the feast. Thank you Mr Bleier for giving focus, dignity and new meaning to my favorite Holiday!

Edward Bleier has written a little book for the ages. With all the fanfare we give each year to Thanksgiving, it is amazing that we don't already have a guide through the meal like the one that Bleier has put together. No American holiday receives more attention in school and yet on Thanksgiving day, we tend to ignore the history and spirit behind the celebration. Bleier provides a concise history to go along with a Thanksgiving meal ceremony. There is also plenty of extra "inspirational material" to draw from. I think kids will take to this companion guide to the meal and the ceremony will reinforce what they have learned in school. Especially for kids (particularly those who have no interest in football), Bleier's book will surely add fun to the feast.

What a marvelous little book! I could write a rave review, but the all-star jacket endorsements say it all: from Julie Nixon Eisenhower - "The Thanksgiving Ceremony is a small gem - a book which brings to life the history, songs and traditions, old and new, of the most widely celebrated holiday of the year. This is a buoyant book, full of hope and praise of all that makes us Americans

We highly recommend this Book! The Thanksgiving Ceremony is a welcome (and overdue) addition to the Thanksgiving Meal. The history, the thoughts and the ceremony that Ed Bleier has included in this book give us the opportunity to reflect upon the significance of this very special holiday. Our family, like most, spends too many hours juggling too many activities. This, of course, always leaves

us with too little time. What Mr. Bleier has thoughtfully reminded us is that Thanksgiving is a day to savor, and a day to remember our blessings--and to do this together at our festive meal! Thank you, Mr. Bleier, for adding the Thanksgiving Ceremony to our Turkey, Stuffing and Pumpkin Pie!

This is a lovely book about what has always been my favourite holiday. I'm American born and live in Europe. Years ago I bought 14 copies of it for Thanksgiving guests from five nations who shared the day at our home in the UK so they'd gain understanding of the meaning of the holiday after the feast was digested. Many reported later they enjoyed the book.

If you too are outside the US and are eager to re-create the Thanksgiving experience, this book will do for your heart and soul what Turkey, stuffing and cranberries will do for your tastebuds. I received this book on a recent visit home and how else am I ever going to convince my friends in Europe that we are NOT all superficial and ungrateful by nature. Ed Bleier gives us a great way to remember where we were raised, how it helped us grow and, well, what values it instilled in us. The Thanksgiving Ceremony is a touchdown as a gift for fellow expats and as food for the soul on this annual celebration of who we are. As they'd say here, Monsieur Bleier, Merci.

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